

AN ANALYSIS OF WOMEN'S CONTRIBUTION TO HOUSEHOLD FOOD SECURITY IN DOKO
DISTRICT OF LAVUN LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA OF NIGER STATE.

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ABSTRACT

While much work has been done on women's roles in Agricultural activities, little has been done on their level of contribution to household food security, particularly in Doko district of Lavun local government area of Niger State. The major objective of this paper is to determine the level of women contribution to household food security, ascertain the percentage of their income spent on consumption and to determine the degree of influences of constraints faced by women in contributing to household food security. Following a survey conducted using 239 randomly selected respondents. The study revealed that about 74% of the respondents have small household size and about 60.7% of the respondents spend up to 60% of their total income on purchasing food items for their household and about 64% of the respondents use their personal farm produce mainly for household consumption. Up to 89.1% of the respondents indicated that they are in dear need of more food and about 77.8% of the respondents strongly agreed that increased/decrease in income usually affect food availability and quality of their household diet. The chi-square analysis revealed that there is no significant relationship between the constraints faced by the women and their level of contribution to household food security (χ^2 1.155; $p > 0.05$). It was recommended that there should be a deliberate effort in enhancing women activities in the study areas so that they can contribute meaningfully to household food security and national food security.

KEYWORDS: Women contribution, household, food security

INTRODUCTION

Women constitute half of the world's population and about 565 million of them reside in rural areas of underdeveloped countries where they perform increasingly indispensable roles in Agricultural and national development. Women also plays very important roles in sub-Saharan Africa where they physically produce 70 – 80 percent of domestic food crops, hence helping in ensuring family (Household) and national food security, (Akpabio 2005). Rural women in developing countries have been found to play a prominent role in agriculture (Boserup 1979; UN 1980; Mencher 1986). (Kabeen 1994) opined that women are the backbone of agricultural sector accounting for 70% of agricultural labour and responsible for 60% agricultural production and 80% of food production.

Until recently, the general trend across the globe had been to relegate women in the scheme of things. In traditional societies, for example women had no value beyond child bearing and other domestic services. Their contribution to household food security and other spheres of community development attracted inadequate recognition. This situation is still true of women in many contemporary societies particularly in the rural enclaves of developing world. (Obasi 2005).

Women contribute to household food security because they have greater influence on household food expenditure, Caloric intake and anthropometric indicators, this occurred because they allocated their time and resources to ensure that the children and elderly are adequately fed with in available means and also pay adequate attention to meeting the physical, mental and social needs of the entire house members. Research results also indicate that women are likely to utilize personal savings and resources for family sustenance unlike man. It has also been revealed that although home garden which are typically owned and

tended by women occupy only 3 percent of family own farm land, those gardens may account for half total family farm produce and serve as shock absorbers during times of household economic and physical hardships (Akpabio 2005). (UNIFEM 1985) also affirmed that quite often women income goes directly in to improving household nutrition, while men use additional income for consumer goods or prestige purposes. Most studies on women contribution to household food security have been carried out in other parts of Nigeria and none have been reported carried out in Niger State and in Doko district in particular.

Based on the aforementioned, there is need to carry out a study on women's contribution to household food security, so as to document their level of contribution to household food security and consequently national food security.

OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY.

1. Describe the socio-economic characteristics of the women in the study area.
2. Investigate the level of women contribution to household food security
3. Examine the percentage of income generated by women that is spent on purchasing food items for household consumption.
3. Determine who is responsible for buying those food items not cultivated at the family level.
4. Determine the degree of influence of constraints faced by women in contributing to household food security.

METHODOLOGY

The study was carried out in 2002 in Doko District of Lavun Local Government Area of Niger State, it is situated in agricultural zone 1 of the state. The inhabitants are predominantly Nupes and other tribes like Hausas , Yoruba's, Igbos and Fulani's as minorities.

The study population consisted of women involved in agricultural activities. Cluster sampling method was used in sampling out 50% of the 4 ADP Extension cells out of the 8 ADP Extension cells that makes up the Doko ADP Extension block (DEB). From each of these 4 cells, sixty respondents were randomly selected for the study. A total of 240 respondents were interviewed using structured interview schedule that were validated and found reliable by using test and re-test method. The interview schedule was administered using trained enumerators and the extension workers that understand the local language. The return rate of the questionnaire was 239 out of 240 (99%).

Data collected include the socio-economic characteristics of respondents, rate of income generation, percentage spent on purchasing food items, level of contribution to household food security, household food requirement and degree of influence of constraints faced by the respondents in relation to their level of contribution to household food security. Data were analyzed using both descriptive statistics (Frequency & Percentages) and inferential statistics such as Chi-square. The level of women contribution to household food security was measured by allotting a weight of 2 point to 9 items. The total for each respondent was than group into 3 levels namely, low [0-6 points], moderate [7-12points] and high [13-18points] in agreement with planning research statistics department, federal ministry of agriculture and natural resources [PSDFMA 1993] and Akinlua [1997]. Chi-square was used to test the hypothesis in the null form of there is no significant relationship between constraints faced by women and there level of contribution household food security.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table 1 shows that about 54% of the women were adult between the ages of 20 – 39 years, this age bracket indicate that majority of the respondents are in their active years. The table also indicates that about 74% of the respondents had small household size. Table 1 further revealed that about 64% of the respondents are illiterates and only about 44% were engaged in buying and selling of agricultural products as their secondary occupation. Majority (63%) of the respondents owned personal farms, this point to the fact that majority of them contribute in one way or the other in ensuring household food security.

Table 1: Socio-Economic Characteristics of Respondents (n=239)

Variables	Frequency	Percentages
<u>Age</u>		
Young: below 20 years	24	10.1
Adult: 20 – 39 years	129	53.9
Old: 40 years & above	86	36.0
<u>Marital Status</u>		
Married	177	74.1
Divorced	27	11.3
Widowed	35	14.6
<u>Religion</u>		
Islam	167	69.9
Christianity	72	30.1
<u>Household Size</u>		
Small: 1 -5 people	135	57.8
Medium: 6 – 11 people	82	34.3
Large: 12 & above	19	
<u>Educational level</u>		
Illiterates	153	65.0
Adult/Primary Education	61	25.6
Secondary	25	10.4
<u>Ownership of farm</u>		
Own personal farm	88	36.8
No personal farm	151	63.2
<u>Secondary occupation</u>		
Trading in non-agric products	96	40.2
Sales of crop/fish/fire wood	103	43.1
Others	40	16.6
<u>Contact with extension</u>		
Regularly	5	2.1
Occasionally	12	5.0
Rarely	148	61.9
Never	74	31.0

Source: Field Survey, 2002

Table 2: Distribution of respondents according to income generation and percentage spent in purchasing food items for the household. (n = 239)

Variables	Frequency	percentage
Approximate total income		
Per month		
Low (1000 – 4000)	77	32.2
Medium 5000 – 8000)	145	60.7
High 9000 & above)	17	7.1
Percentage spent in purchasing food items for the house hold		
29% and below	58	24.2
30% - 59%	146	69.9
60% and above	14	5.9

Source – Field survey, 2002

As can be seen from table 2, majority (61%) of the respondents generate between N5000 – 8000=) in a month and about 70% of them spent between 30 – 59% of their total income in purchasing food items for the household, thereby contributing their quarter to household food security.

Table 3: Distribution of respondents level of involvement in ensuring household food security (n=239)

Variable	Frequency	Percentage
Uses of Personal Farm Produce		
Market/Sale	31	13.0
Household consumption/sale	55	23.0
Mainly for household consumption	153	64.0
Purposes of rearing livestock		
For sale	31	12.9
For festivals/sales	27	11.3
Household consumption	139	58.2
No response	42	17.6
Purchase of food not cultivated by family		
Wife only	23	9.6
Husband Only	46	19.3
Both	170	71.1

Source – field survey, 2002.

Table 3 revealed that about 64% of the respondents use their personal farm produce mainly for household consumption and about 58.2% of them reared livestock mainly for the purpose of household consumption and for sales to generate some income. This table also shows that majority (71%) of the respondents indicated that both husbands and wives are responsible for purchasing those food items not cultivated by the family. This point to fact that women from the study area are not left behind by their male counterpart in ensuring household food security.

Table 4 Distribution of respondents household food requirement and the effect of increase/decrease in income as it affect food availability and quality (n = 239).

Variable	Frequency	Percentage
Need for more food		
Yes	213	89.1
No	26	10.9
Influenced by increase/decrease in income		
Yes	186	77.8
No	53	22.2
Effect of increase in income		
Availability of food	186	77.8
More quality diet	53	22.2
Effect of decrease in income		
Less food availability	186	77.8
Less quality diet	53	22.2

Source – field survey, 2002.

Table 4 revealed that majority (89.1%) of the household in the study area are in dear need of more food at the family levels, this points to the fact that many household are experiencing food crises, also about 77.8% of the respondents agreed that increase/decrease income at the household level affect food availability and consequently the quality of their diet, this is inconformity with what is been experienced worldwide, as the income increases there is food availability and the quality of diet also improves and live versa.

Table 5 indicate that majority (60.3%) of the respondents highly support their household incase of unexpected circumstances which directly or indirectly have implication for household food security. The table also shows that majority (82.4%) of the respondents husband from the study area appreciate the efforts of their wives in contributing to household food security. This points to the fact that the roles of women in various spheres of life is now been recognized more than ever before

Table 5: distribution of respondents level of support to household incase of unexpected circumstances and the recognition of their roles by their spouses (n = 239)

Variables	Frequency	Percentage
Level of support		
Highly	144	60.3
Averagely	48	20.1
Fairly	29	12.1
No response	18	7.5
Appreciation of their roles by their spouses		
Highly appreciated	197	82.4
Moderately appreciated	30	12.6
Fairly appreciated	12	5.0

Source – Field Survey, 2002.

Table 6: Data for testing of hypothesis.

Degree of influence of constraints	Level of contribution to household food			
	Low	Moderate	High	Total
Always influence	1	8	2	11
Often influence	9	73	17	99
Rarely influence	10	97	22	129
Total	20	178	41	239

Source: Field Survey, 2002

Table 7: Chi-square (χ^2) Analysis of the relationship between contribution to household food security and the influence of constraints faced by women.

Independent Variable	Degree of freedom	Cal. χ^2 value	Tab. χ^2 Value	P value	Decision
Contribution to household food Security	4	0.155	9.488	0.05	Accepted

The result of Chi square analysis, reveal that there was no significant relationship between the constraints faced by the women and there level of contribution to house hold food security χ^2 (0.155; $p > 0.05$). This implies that despite the fact that women are faced by numerous constraints, they have device several means of over coming the constraints, so as to be able to contribute meaningfully to household food security.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The study shows that most (64%) of the respondents used their personal farm produce mainly for household consumption and about 70% of them spent there total income in ensuring household food security. Though women from the study area encountered various problems in ensuring household food security, these problems have little or no significant influence on their level of contribution to household food security. This paper recommends that there should be a deliberate effort in enhancing women activities in the study area, this can be achieved by recruiting and posting female extension workers to the area to help women in their agricultural and home economics activities.

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